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RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 4063
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 9609
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2844
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 1435
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4507
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 9060
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 8756
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 8216
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 3833
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC
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RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [PBTS](#) [MOPS](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [PK](#) [IN](#)
SUBJECT: INDIA AWASH WITH SPECULATION ABOUT FRIENDSHIP
TRAIN BOMBING CULPRITS

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Classified By: PolCouns Ted Osius, Reason 1.5 (B,D)

11. (S) Summary. As the death toll in the February 19th Samjauta Express bombing continued to rise on February 21st, press reports in India began to hint at rumors that the likely culprits were Lashkar-e-Taiba or Jaish-e-Muhammad. Police and Indian officials, however, continue to join their Pakistani colleagues in asking the Indian public to wait until all of the evidence comes in before speculating. Two unexploded suitcase bombs left on the train allowed investigators to conclude that the devices were quite sophisticated, relying on small-scale explosives to ignite a large-scale fire and cause as many casualties as possible. Meanwhile Pakistani Foreign Minister Kasuri decided to cut short his four day trip to New Delhi, although he and Indian Foreign Minister Mukherjee had substantive discussions about the composite dialogue, signed a long-awaited agreement on Reducing the Risk of Accidents Relating to Nuclear Weapons, and agreed to hold the first Counter-Terrorism Joint Mechanism meeting in Islamabad on March 6th. Our interlocutors say that Mukherjee is likely to pass evidence about the train attacks on to Pakistani officials at the March 6th meeting. End Summary.

Bits of Evidence

12. (C) The death toll surrounding the February 19th Samjauta

Express train bombing grew to 68 on February 21st, as a Pakistani burn victim succumbed to his injuries. Indian police released detailed sketches of two suspects, whom witnesses say left the train 20 km short of Deewana station some 15 minutes before the explosions took place. Press reports are unclear as to why the train stopped briefly to allow the suspects to leave, with some witnesses saying the train slowed to let them off because they said they were on the wrong train and others saying the train stopped because of construction. Police officials also told reporters the suspects had a heated argument with members of the Railway Protection Force (RPF) who came through the rail cars conducting routine security checks. The suspects claimed they boarded the wrong train, that they wanted to go to Ahmedabad, and that they did not have proper identification. Witnesses claimed that the two spoke Hindi.

13. (C) Press reports say the terrorists planted six suitcases in three compartments of the Samjauta Express train, although only four of them had actually exploded. The remaining two suitcases have become important clues in the police investigations of the attacks. The suitcases contained two detonators, one connected to the keyhole of the suitcase and the other connected to a timer. The two bombs that did not detonate were set to the wrong time -- instead of 00:00, or 12:00 am on February 19th, they were set for 12:00, or noon on February 19th. The bombs were designed to cause a low intensity explosion that would ignite the multiple bottles of kerosene packed into the suitcases with pieces of cloth, creating a huge ball of fire.

Speculation About the Culprits

14. (S) Pre-eminent Indian Counter-Terrorism expert Dr. Ajai
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Sahni, who heads the Institute for Conflict Management, told Poloff that he believed the attacks were meant to look like an arson fire carried out by Hindu fundamentalist groups like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) or Shiv Sena. He said that if all of the bombs on the trains had blown up, igniting the multiple bottles of kerosene contained in each device's suitcase, several cars would have been consumed by flames, all of the evidence would have been destroyed in the fires, and the attacks would have looked like an arson fire designed to kill Pakistani Muslims in India. He speculated that the more likely culprits were Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Muhammad, or similar groups that have staged multiple attacks in the past several years to foment communal violence, to increase their recruitment among Indian Muslims, and to disrupt the India-Pakistan peace process. He said, by contrast, the RSS and Shiv Sena have been known to do very cruel things in riots -- including the mob violence that killed some 2,000 mostly Muslim Indians in Gujarat in 2002 -- but they have never become an armed force with guns and bombs. He said this attack, with multiple perpetrators and longterm planning, surveillance, and training speaks of a large group with many resources at its disposal. He commented that if the RSS or Shiv Sena went through a similar transformation, it would not go unnoticed by security forces in India. He said, however, that he believed the Indian police were pursuing every available lead and that they would follow the evidence from witnesses, intercepts, and forensics to track the culprits.

Kasuri Cutting Short His Trip

15. (S) Pakistan High Commission Political Counselor Zulfikar Gardezi told Poloff that Pakistan Foreign Minister Kasuri would likely cut his trip to New Delhi short, canceling social occasions planned for the delegation, in order to focus on the train bombings. He said Kasuri went directly to the hospital to visit victims of the train bombings as soon as he arrived in New Delhi. Gardezi said that while India

was very helpful in the initial aftermath of the incident and the Pakistani High Commission was able to send a delegation to Panipat on February 19th, Pakistan was as yet still unable to get permission from India to send Pakistani relatives of the victims to Panipat. He said his government was still working with India to get the special permission necessary for Pakistanis to visit Panipat, but he believed it was just a matter of time before this was worked out.

¶6. (S) Gardezi said India and Pakistan were cooperating well in the aftermath of the incident, and that Kasuri's discussions with Indian Foreign Minister Mukherjee had been productive. He reported there was a bilateral meeting with Mukherjee, followed by technical level talks between eight sub groups on the composite dialogue. He said the two sides agreed to hold a Counter-Terrorism Joint Mechanism meeting in Islamabad on March 6th, and they signed the long-discussed agreement on Reducing the Risk of Accidents Related to Nuclear Weapons, which is designed to prevent accidents that could have cross-border impact. Gardezi stressed Kasuri's statements that we should hold off on speculation in the media as to the culprits of the train bombings until the investigation is complete. He noted that Mukherjee had made similar statements in his discussions with Kasuri and the

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press. Mukherjee has also promised to provide detailed information to Pakistan about the investigations into the train bombings at the March 6th meeting.

Comment: A Cruel and Sophisticated Death Trap

¶7. (C) Comment: The device used in these bombings was sophisticated, not in the materials it used, but in the detailed plan used to kill as many people as possible by burning them alive. While the devices used in the July 2006 Mumbai train bombs and others made of RDX killed many people in the initial blast, the explosions created a large hole in the side of the train, allowing survivors to leave the train quickly. By contrast, the Samjhauta Express bombs appear designed to create small explosions that would ignite a large fire, and since the passengers could not open the train's jammed doors or escape out the barred windows, locked them inside the compartments to die. The devices, complete with saffron colored cloth used to ignite the flames, produced deaths eerily reminiscent of the Godhra train fires of 2002, which killed 58 people and sparked communal riots resulting in roughly 2000 Muslim deaths. This observation, however, leads investigators no closer to finding the culprits, and as Ajai Sahni and Zulfikar Gardezi point out, Indian officials are still following the evidence to wherever it leads. The carnage on the "Friendship Express" brings back awful memories of the horror of Partition. We can only hope these 68 who died will nudge the two countries closer together.
End Comment.
MULFORD